

Bolting Out Doors

Bolting out the door is a **very dangerous** behaviour for both your puppy and the people he may meet. He can get lost or hurt, or if someone approaches him, he may bite out of fear.

The step-by-step process outlined below to address this behaviour is based upon the *sit* and *stay* cues. Remember that it is important to **keep eye contact** with the puppy when training *stay*. Place a small rug near the door your puppy has tried to bolt out of. Make sure the rug is far enough away from the door so you can open and close the door without the puppy having to move. Practice *sit* and *stay* on this rug with your puppy. Remember to *always release the puppy* from a *stay*. If your puppy bolts out of every door in your home, then start off with one door until he can hold his *sit/stay*. Once he is doing well at one door, you can train the same behaviour again at another door in your home. Usually after two or three doors, your puppy will understand that “sit/stay” means “sit/stay no matter which door he is at.”

Once he is doing well with the previous step, you can introduce the door actually being opened. Put him on his leash and ask him to “sit/stay” on his rug by the door. Hold onto the leash or step on the leash, open the door, and immediately close the door. Return to the puppy, mark and reward him if he held the *sit/stay*, and release him. If he did not hold the *stay*, put him back in the exact same position he was in originally and give the cue for “sit” and then “stay.” Wait a moment, then mark and release him for staying still. Repeat this exercise until you can open and close the door quickly without him breaking the *sit/stay* cue.

Gradually increase the amount of time you can hold the door open without him breaking the *sit/stay*. Each time, return to the puppy, mark and reward him if he held the *sit/stay* position, and release him. If he did not hold the *stay*, put him back in the original location and into a *sit/stay* again. Wait a moment, then mark and release him. Repeat this exercise until you can keep any of your doors open for 30 seconds and your puppy holds the *sit/stay* cue. Remember to always mark, reward, and release him from the cue.

Now have a friend ring the doorbell or knock on the door. Your puppy will probably run to the door to see who is there. Calmly walk to the door with leash in hand, call your puppy’s name to get his attention, and put his leash on him. Put him into a *sit/stay* on his rug, hold onto the leash, and open the door slowly. If he holds the *stay*, have your friend come in to the house, return to the puppy, mark and reward him with a jackpot, then release him. If he did not hold the *stay*, put him back in the original location and into a *sit/stay*. Wait a moment, then mark and release him. Repeat this step until the puppy can hold his *sit/stay* until your friend is inside of your home and then quickly release him. At this stage, ask your friend to ignore the puppy completely and not make eye contact. You want your puppy to *keep eye contact with you* until he is released. Then repeat what you did in the last step, but ask your friend to calmly greet your puppy while he is in the *sit/stay* position. If he breaks the *sit/stay*, your friend should immediately ignore the puppy while you put him back in the original position and into a *sit/stay*. Have your friend try to calmly greet your puppy again, and this time offer him treats while your friend goes to pet him. If he can hold his *sit/stay*

while being petted, quickly mark and reward him. Repeat this a few times until he is consistent at paying attention to you while your friend pets him. Once he is consistent, you can stop offering treats while he is in the *sit/stay* and have your friend softly pet him.

If he holds the position, jackpot him with many small treats for a job well done. If he is still breaking the *sit/stay*, ask for a *sit* and then quickly reward and release him. For now, training the *sit/stay* at the door is done. By **ending this training session on a positive note**, your puppy will have an opportunity to think about what just happened and look forward to the next training session. You can work on this behaviour later in the day or the following day. **Keep your lessons short**, and *always end a training session on a positive note*.

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If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us